

Teen Dating Violence Among Latin@ Youth: Research-Based Facts

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INTRODUCTION

Teen dating violence (TDV) refers to intimate partner violence that occurs between two youth in a dating or romantic relationship. Like intimate partner violence in adult relationships, TDV can include physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and stalking.¹ TDV is recognized as a major public health concern that impacts adolescents from all ethnic and racial backgrounds in the United States.

1 in 5 youth at large is a survivor of physical TDV, and 1 in 10 youth at large is a survivor of sexual TDV.² However, little is known about the prevalence and experience of TDV for Latin@ youth.

To provide insight into the experience of TDV for Latin@ youth, Casa de Esperanza reviewed 10 years (2008-2017) of academic research that examines TDV with exclusively Latin@ samples. The following review includes research published about Latin@ adolescents in the United States between the ages of 13-17 years old and middle or high school students.

Our review of the literature revealed a wide range of rates on the prevalence of TDV among Latin@ youth and identified a growing body of research that examines several potential individual and family level risk and protective factors. There continues to be a large gap in strengths-based research and research that centers the experiences of Latin@ youth.³

Casa de Esperanza has chosen to use "@" in place of the masculine "o" when referring to people or things that are either gender neutral or both masculine and feminine in make-up. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that both men and women make to our communities.

PREVALENCE OF TDV AMONG LATIN@ YOUTH

Existing research suggests that many youth in the United States have experienced TDV; an in-depth review of TDV prevalence rates among all youth finds that 20% of youth experience physical TDV and 10% experience sexual TDV in their lifetimes, while youth who identify as various respective cultural minorities experience higher rates of physical TDV.² However, this review was limited in its examination of prevalence rates for Latin@ youth.

Below, we provide the latest rates of TDV among Latin@ youth reported in several academic research studies. The estimated prevalence of TDV among Latin@ youth varies widely because of the various strategies that researchers use to capture this information. In our review of the research literature, we found that between 5-44% of Latin@ youth experienced physical TDV and 5-27% of Latin@ youth experienced sexual TDV. The rates reported by each study are summarized below.

- In a sample of 64 Mexican-American youth in the Southwest U.S.,^{4,5} 73% had experienced physical, psychological, and/or sexual TDV in the past year. 44% of Latin@ youth had experienced physical TDV in the past year.
- In a national sample of 1,525 Latin@ youth,⁶ 17% had experienced physical, psychological, and/or sexual TDV in the past year.
 - » 5% of Latin@ youth had experienced physical TDV in the past year. 2% of Latinas and 8% of Latinos had experienced physical TDV in the past year.
 - » 5% of Latin@ youth had experienced sexual TDV. 4% of Latinas and 5% of Latinos had experienced sexual TDV in the past year.
- In a sample of 677 Latin@ youth in New York who were dating in the past year,⁷ 30% of Latinas and 28% of Latinos had experienced physical TDV in the past year. 14% of Latinas and 17% of Latinos reported experiencing sexual coercion by their dating partner in the past year.
- Among 322 Latin@ youth in the greater D.C. area,⁸ 14% had experienced physical TDV in the past year
- Among 82 Cuban youth in south Florida,⁹ between 35-40% of Latinas and 33-43% of Latinos experienced physical and/or sexual TDV in the past 12 months
- A study of 126 pregnant and parenting Latinas in Texas¹⁰ found that 17% of Latinas had experienced physical TDV in the past 3 months.
- Among 66 Latin@ youth in middle school,¹¹ 45% had experienced physical, psychological, and/or sexual TDV in their lifetimes.
- A study of 1,213 Latin@ high school students in New York¹² found that 38% had experienced physical and/or sexual relationship violence at some point in their lifetime. Of those 36% had experienced physical TDV and 10% had experienced sexual TDV in their lifetimes.

- Among 4,814 Latin@ high school students in Minnesota,¹³ 13% had experienced physical or psychological TDV and 10.9% had experienced sexual TDV in their lifetimes.
- A study of 201 Latin@ youth in North Carolina¹⁴ found that 15% had experienced physical TDV in their lifetimes, including 9% of Latinas and 22% of Latinos. 13% of Latin@ youth had experienced sexual TDV in their lifetimes including 14% of Latinas and 12% of Latinos.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR TDV AMONG LATIN@ YOUTH

A protective factor is anything that helps to reduce the likelihood of experiencing harm, like TDV. Protective factors can be found within the individual (e.g. self-esteem), in the family (e.g. positive parent-youth relationships), and in the community (e.g. beliefs against violence). It is important to note that the responsibility of preventing TDV does not lie with the survivor and more research is needed to understand protective factors for the perpetration of TDV. Below, we summarize the research literature on protective factors for experiencing TDV among Latin@ youth as many of these factors may also prevent other forms of harm.

- Latin@ youth with good coping skills and higher self-esteem were less likely to experience TDV.⁸
- Latinas with greater conflict resolution skills were less likely to experience multiple forms of TDV.¹⁴

Strong family and parent relationships are important for reducing the risk of TDV

- The more that Latin@ youth felt their parents cared about them, the less likely they were to experience sexual or physical TDV in their lifetime.¹³
- Latin@ youth were less likely to be psychologically victimized if they came from a home with strong family cohesion — that is, when they feel close to their family members.¹⁵
- For Latina youth, the stronger communicative practices they had with their parents, the less likely they were to experience all forms of TDV.¹⁰
- Latin@ youth were less likely to experience TDV when they came from homes with higher levels of parental monitoring and family connectedness.⁸
- Higher quality of parent-adolescent relationships was significantly related to lower risk of sexual TDV.¹⁵
- For Latinas, higher levels of communication with their fathers significantly lowered their risk of experiencing sexual TDV.¹³

Latino cultural orientation is a protective factor

- Latinas with stronger ties to traditional Latino cultural values and orientation related to a lower risk of experiencing physical TDV in the past year.⁷
- Latinas from Spanish-dominant homes had half the risk of experiencing TDV compared to Latinas from English-dominant homes.¹⁶

RISK FACTORS FOR TDV AMONG LATIN@ YOUTH

Like protective factors, risk factors refer to anything that can increase the likelihood of experiencing TDV and can occur within individuals, families, and communities.

- Being afraid of a partner significantly increased the risk of experiencing physical TDV for both male and female Latin@s and increased the risk of experiencing sexual coercion for Latinas.¹⁵
- In a study of Latin@ youth and their parents, youth with more acculturated parents were more likely to experience physical and sexual TDV.¹⁵
- In the same study, acculturation conflict -- differences in levels of acculturation between parents and youth -- significantly increased youth's risk of experiencing psychological and sexual TDV.¹⁵

Past victimization

- Latin@ youth who had ever experienced non-partner sexual abuse were more likely to have experienced physical dating violence in the past year.⁷
- Latin@ youth who experienced childhood abuse were more likely to experience sexual TDV in early adulthood.¹⁷

Social norms

- Latin@ youth with more traditional gender role attitudes as adolescents were more likely to experience physical and psychological intimate partner violence as young adults.¹⁷

- Among Latina adolescents, those who held more accepting views of TDV were more likely to have experienced multiple forms of TDV.¹⁴

Unhealthy behaviors

- Latin@ youth who reported experiencing physical TDV in the last 12 months were also likely to report unhealthy or risky behaviors such as weapon carrying, physical fighting, gang involvement, and substance use.⁸
- U.S.-born Latinas who've had sexual intercourse were almost five times as likely to experience physical TDV, however no relationship was found between sexual experience and TDV for immigrant Latinas.¹⁶
- Experiencing TDV was not significantly related to a history of sexually transmitted diseases, condom use during the most recent sexual encounter or having multiple sex partners among pregnant Latina girls.¹⁰

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